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News Release

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Washington, D.C. -- Tahoma National Cemetery, the 115th Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national cemetery and the first in Washington state, will be dedicated in a ceremony honoring all U.S. military veterans Friday, Sept. 26.

VA Secretary-Designate Hershel Gober said, "This new cemetery reflects both the commitment of the brave men and women who served our country and our nation's commitment to these veterans. The veterans of Washington state have worked long and hard for a national cemetery. Their efforts are finally being rewarded with a national shrine befitting their sacrifice and dedication."

The \$10 million cemetery is located 20 miles southeast of Seattle. The first phase of construction, covering 43 acres of the 160-acre site, will allow for more than 10,000 gravesites and 4,000 niches for cremated remains. Also completed are the cemetery's entrance area, a public information center with automated kiosk for quick information access, administration and maintenance complexes, a flag/assembly area, a memorial walkway, two committal service shelters, a roadway system, landscaping and utility systems.

National Cemetery System Director Jerry W. Bowen said, "The Tahoma National Cemetery is in keeping with VA's mission to honor our country's veterans with dignified burial. With more than 600,000 veterans living in Washington state and more than 400,000 in the Puget Sound area, Tahoma will quickly become one of VA's busiest cemeteries."

The cemetery's name is derived from Puget Sound's Native Americans, who refer to nearby Mount Rainier as "Tahoma," which means "snowiest peak" or "the mountain that is God." Mount Rainier, which has a lower peak called "Little Tahoma," serves as a majestic visual anchor from the cemetery's flag assembly area looking southeast toward the main entrance.

All veterans with discharges other than dishonorable, their spouses and dependent children are eligible for burial in a national cemetery. VA also provides grave markers or headstones for the unmarked graves of eligible veterans even if they are not buried in a VA cemetery. Information on VA burial benefits is available from national cemetery offices and VA regional offices, which can be reached toll-free at 1-800-827-1000.

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